

Thanksgiving offers time to reflect on good fortune

By F. Whitten Peters and Gen. Michael E. Ryan
Secretary of the Air Force and Air Force Chief of Staff

As Americans, our great fortune is to live in a country full of hope and prosperity — a country that promises liberty for all of its citizens.

Traditionally, we have set aside Thanksgiving as a day to celebrate the many blessings we enjoy as people of this great nation. Like those who began this tradition, our Armed Forces continue to proudly carry the torch of freedom.

Thanksgiving commemorates the Pilgrims' first harvest more than three centuries ago after traveling to a distant and unknown land in pursuit of an ideal. They held that historic feast to give thanks for the peace, prosperity and religious freedom they found in the "New

World."

As we gather this Thanksgiving, let us reflect on the blessings we enjoy today and acknowledge the selflessness of the men and women of our Air Force in assuring our security and freedom. Again this year, nearly 90,000 Air Force members are stationed or deployed overseas, many separated from family and friends.

Our thoughts and prayers are with them and their loved ones as they perform their vital missions.

To all the members of our great Air Force — active duty, Guard, Reserve, civilian and retired, and your families — thank you for your dedication and commitment.

We salute you for continuing our rich legacy of service and for upholding the ideals of democracy.

Have a safe and happy Thanksgiving.

Holiday message from AMC

By Gen. Charles T. "Tony" Robertson Jr.
AMC commander, U.S. Transportation Command commander in chief

As we approach the new year and the holiday season, it is only fitting that we pause for a moment to recognize the special significance this particular holiday season brings.

For certainly, the approach of this new year signals the end of a very special era — an era whose last years will be marked by history as one in which America stood tall as the world's beacon of freedom and democracy.

And as we enter the new millenium, the good news is that we can remain confident that the bedrock values that built our great nation into the world leader that it is today, will remain steadfast for many years to come.

As we gather in thanks through the upcoming holidays, we truly have many blessings to count...among them, a nation at peace, a prosperous standard of living, and a promising future. These blessings are your legacy to our world...the legacy of the armed forces of the United States

and, in particular, one of the legacies of the men and women of the United States Transportation Command and Air Mobility Command.

Throughout 1999, in the face of every contingency and crisis the world could dream up, USTRANSCOM and AMC played the major role in moving our nation's strength — both combat strength and humanitarian strength — to every corner of the globe. As we approach this holiday season, please accept my personal thanks for your selfless contributions and for the continuing spirit of enthusiasm, innovation and dedication that brought us so much success this past year.

And as we enter the new millenium, bringing with us the same spirit and strength that marked us so proudly in the last, I encourage each of you to also bring with you a keen sense of optimism and a renewed sense of awareness of the great opportunities for goodness our great nation has to offer to our world. To each of you and to your families, please be safe in your celebrations, enjoy the holidays, and have an outstanding new year.

General Statistics

■ Traffic crashes are the greatest single cause of death for every age from five through twenty-seven. Almost half of these crashes are alcohol-related. (NHTSA, 1996)

■ Approximately 19.3% of all drivers involved in fatal crashes in 1995 were intoxicated at the time of their crash (21% in 1993). (NHTSA, 1996)

■ In single-vehicle fatal crashes occurring on weekend nights in 1994, 72.3% of the fatally injured drivers 25 years old or older were intoxicated, as compared with 57.7% of drivers under the age of 25. (NHTSA, 1995)

■ In 1995, 32% of all fatal crashes during the week were alcohol-related, compared to 54% on weekends. For all crashes, the alcohol involvement rate was 5% during the week and 11% during the weekend. (NHTSA, 1996)

■ It is estimated that 2.6 million drunk driving crashes each year victimize 4 million innocent people who are injured or have their vehicles damaged. (Miller et al, 1996b)

■ In 1993, one in 100 drivers had a BAC of .10 or greater. About 16 billion miles were driven drunk. (Miller et al, 1996c)

■ In fatal crashes, the proportion of drivers who were intoxicated (blood alcohol content of .10 or greater) decreased from 25.7% in 1985 to 19.3% in 1995, a 25% decrease in that proportion. (NHTSA, 1996)

■ The number of intoxicated drivers killed in traffic crashes decreased from 9,805 in 1985 to 7,538 in 1995, a reduction of 20%.

Driving impaired can be a deadly mistake - don't make it

By Lana Thomas
437 AW Safety

With the holiday season just around the corner, now is a good time to remind everyone to drive responsibly and sober.

Alcohol is the single greatest contributing factor to fatal motor vehicle crashes nationwide.

However, keep in mind that fatigue, stress and certain prescription and over-the-counter medications can affect your ability to drive.

In addition, when combined with alcohol, the combination can be an even deadlier mix.

In 1996 alone, 321,000 people were injured and 17,126 people were killed in alcohol-related crashes.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) estimates that about three in every 10 Americans will be involved in an alcohol-related crash at some time in their lives.

Don't become one of them. Make it a life-governing rule not to drive when you have had too much to drink. Ride with a designated driver; call a cab or a friend.

If you have been working overtime or your baby or children have been keeping you

up at night, be aware of how tired you are.

Studies have shown that staying awake for 18 hours has the same effect on human performance as having a blood alcohol level of .05.

If you are on medication that causes drowsiness, do not drive, call a cab or ride with someone else.

You have a responsibility to yourself, your family, friends, and co-workers to avoid being involved in an impaired-driving crash, which could result in a fatality of another human.

You also have a responsibility to make sure others stay safe. So if you're hosting a party, serve alternatives to alcohol, have transportation options ready for anyone who should not drive, and, of course, do not serve alcohol to anyone who is under 21.

Be a responsible guest as well. When you are at office and family events, and you see other guests who have had too much to drink getting ready to drive, stop them. Take away their keys and call a cab or drive them home.

When you are going out with friends to a party, picnic, sports event, or known alcoholic event; make sure there is

a designated driver and make sure that person agrees to abstain from drinking alcohol the entire time.

You will be setting a great example for others, especially your children.

Adult behaviors produce a profound effect on young people's decisions about alcohol.

Remember that children will do as you do, not as you say. So if you drink, demonstrate responsibility and use alcohol in moderation.

You will be ensuring your safety now and their safety in the years to come. Stay Alert, stay alive.

Tips for keeping, yourself, your family and others safe on the road:

■ Be responsible. Drive sober!

■ If you are taking prescription medicine or over-the-counter medicine that warns you not to drive, then don't risk it.

■ If you are overly tired or

stressed, call a cab or a friend for a ride.

■ Always buckle up! It is your best defense against poor and impaired drivers.

■ Drive courteously but defensively. Keep your eye out for the other guy.

Clues on how to spot an impaired driver:

■ Weaving, swerving or drifting between lanes

■ Driving at a very slow or very fast speed

■ Inconsistent signal use

■ Erratic and dangerous braking

■ Driving with the window down in cold weather

■ Driving with tires on the lane markings

In 1998, there were 41,471 traffic fatalities. Of those, 15,935 were alcohol-related. 38.4% of the total traffic fatalities were alcohol-related.

- Mother's Against Drunk Drivers

